

## **Syrian President Lays Foundation Stone of USD 3 billion Tigris River Project**

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The Syrian President on March 7 laid the foundation stone of the Tigris River project, a USD 3 billion scheme that is expected to revive water supply and agriculture production in the north east.

The Tigris River project is aimed at diverting water from the Tigris River towards the now almost dry Khabour River and help in the process the irrigation of some 150,000 hectares of land.

The project had been on the drawing boards of the Government for some three decades but had been regularly postponed for budgetary reasons. It was revived only in 2008 as the country faced a drought of historic proportions that led to a dramatic decline in agriculture output and to the displacements of hundreds of thousands of people.

In August of last year the Government had announced that the first phase of the project had been completed. On numerous occasions the Government has said that the project would be made an upmost priority.

The Tigris River, which is sourced in Turkey, does not enter the Syrian territory as such but lies over the Syrian-Iraqi border. As a consequence Syria can only use a small share of it although it hasn't done so yet.

The Tigris River could take up to 18 years to be completed, according to some estimates.